

Middle and
High School

John Brown and the Fight Over Slavery in Territorial Kansas

Overview

This Nearpod.com lesson can be teacher led or self-paced for students. It begins with a map-reading exercise to understand the history of slavery expansion in the U.S. up to 1854 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Using primary sources, students learn about the “Bleeding Kansas” conflicts due to the implementation of Popular Sovereignty. Interactive quizzes and open-ended questions provide students the opportunity to evaluate abolitionist John Brown’s role to end slavery. Students will then interpret symbols representing this time period using artist John Steuart Curry’s mural, *Tragic Prelude*.

Standards

KHGSS Standards (2020)

Standard 1 Choices have consequences.

Benchmark 1.3 The student will investigate and connect examples of choices and consequences with contemporary issues.

ELA Reading Informational Standards (2017)

RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

ELA Writing Standards (2017)

W.7.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Objectives

Content

1. The student will identify the actions John Brown took to support his abolitionist beliefs.
2. The student will discover the sacrifices John Brown made in his efforts to make Kansas a free state and to end slavery in the United States.
3. The student will analyze the symbols in John Steuart Curry’s mural *Tragic Prelude* and draw a conclusion on why Curry gave the mural this name.

Skill

1. The student will read and analyze primary sources including a tombstone, a painting, and a letter.

Essential Questions

1. Was John Brown a terrorist or a hero?
2. Did the Civil War begin in Territorial Kansas?
3. Can one person make a difference?

Assessments

Students can choose one question and write a one-page persuasive argument (questions 1 and 2) or research paper (question 3).

1. Can one person make a difference? How did John Brown make a difference?
2. Because of the violence in Territorial Kansas, can you make an argument that the Civil War started in Kansas?
3. What controversial political issues are in the news today? How do people show support for one side or the other?